



Washington  
State Department of  
Agriculture

PO Box 42560  
Olympia, Washington 98504-2560  
*Visit our Web site at:* [agr.wa.gov](http://agr.wa.gov)  
[Subscribe to WSDA News Releases](#)

For immediate release: Dec. 16, 2014 (14-25)

Contact: [Hector Castro](#) (360) 902-1815

## **WSDA to hold town hall meeting in Lynden on avian influenza**

**OLYMPIA** – The [Washington State Department of Agriculture](#) (WSDA) will hold a town hall meeting this Thursday to discuss avian influenza and steps poultry owners should be taking to protect their birds following confirmation of the disease among wild fowl in our state.

The [U.S. Department of Agriculture](#) (USDA) today confirmed the presence of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) in wild birds in Whatcom County. Two separate virus strains were identified: HPAI H5N2 in a northern pintail duck and HPAI H5N8 in a captive gyrfalcon that was fed hunter-killed wild birds.

There have been no reports of avian influenza in Washington's domestic poultry population, though the disease can be deadly to poultry and other birds.

Humans are rarely affected by avian influenza and there has never been a reported instance of a person becoming ill from an infected bird in the United States, although some cases have occurred in foreign countries where people have come in close contact with infected birds.

"There are many strains of avian influenza and it is not uncommon for wild waterfowl to carry the virus," said Dr. Joe Baker, Washington state veterinarian. "This is why it is critical for poultry owners to take steps to protect their birds from wild fowl."

The WSDA town hall meeting will be at 6 p.m. Dec. 18 in the Mt. Baker Rotary Building at the Northwest Washington Fairgrounds in Lynden. It is open to the public and WSDA would particularly encourage poultry producers or owners of backyard flocks to attend.

The finding in Whatcom County was quickly reported and identified due to increased surveillance for avian influenza in light of the avian influenza affecting commercial poultry in British Columbia.

Swab samples from the captive gyrfalcon were sent to the Washington State University Avian Health & Food Safety Laboratory in Puyallup and confirmed positive over the weekend through the USDA's National Veterinary Services Laboratory in Iowa.

The virus can be spread by direct contact with infected birds, contaminated equipment, and through airborne transmission over short distances. The virus is found in feces, saliva, and respiratory secretions of birds carrying the disease.

More

Washington state officials and the USDA are working jointly to do additional surveillance and testing of birds in the nearby Whatcom County area.

Birds affected by avian influenza can show a variety of symptoms, including:

- decreased appetite
- coughing and sneezing
- lowered egg production
- greenish diarrhea
- excessive thirst
- swollen wattles and combs

Persons seeing sickness in domestic birds are asked to contact the WSDA Avian Health Program at 1-800-606-3056. Sick and dead wild birds should be reported to the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife at 1-800-606-8768. If you are concerned about sickness in you or your family, please contact Washington State Department of Health at 1-800-525-0127.

###

Follow WSDA on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [YouTube](#)